Response to *Mater Populi Fidelis* by the
International Marian Association
Theological Commission

Introduction

1. The International Marian Association is a group of cardinals, bishops, clergy, religious, theologians and lay leaders who seek to promote full Marian truth and devotion throughout the world. In light of its mission, the IMA's Theological Commission respectfully wishes to offer the following response to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in reference to its recent doctrinal note, *Mater Populi Fidelis*: *Doctrinal Note on Some Marian Titles Regarding Mary's Cooperation in the Work of Salvation issued by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, November 4, 2025*. In its presentation, the DDF explains that this Note is not intended to be "comprehensive or exhaustive," but it does seek "to maintain the necessary balance that must be within the Christian mysteries between Christ's sole mediation and Mary's cooperation in the work of salvation."

2. The IMA's Theological Commission [IMA] positively recognizes the document's strong emphasis in affirming Jesus Christ as the sole divine Redeemer of humanity and the one divine Mediator between God and men (cf. 1 Tim 2:5). The DDF also notes that Christ's mediation is inclusive, and "He enables various forms of participation in his salvific plans" (n. 28—29). It highlights some important Scriptural references to Mary's cooperation in salvation history such as Gen 3:15, Jn 2:4, and Jn 19:26. Patristic and medieval authors are also cited, as well as Marian liturgical and iconographic expressions, including those from the Christian East (n. 14–19). It affirms in general the cooperation of the faithful in the saving work of Christ (n. 28), and it refers to the singular and distinct cooperation of Mary, though without attributing to it an objective redemptive value (n. 37A and 64). Mary's spiritual motherhood is affirmed (n. 35) as well as her role as heavenly intercessor (n. 41) and model disciple (n. 73–74).

Substantial Points in Need of Clarification and Modification

3. In spite of these positive aspects of *Mater Populi Fidelis* [MPF], the IMA maintains *that there remain significant theological points that require substantial clarification and modification*. We recognize that MPF as a doctrinal note by the DDF has been approved for publication by Pope Leo XIV and is an expression of the ordinary Magisterium, albeit on a level lower than that of direct pronouncements of the Pope (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 25). However, the Magisterium in general and the DDF in specific recognize the right of theologians to communicate their difficulties to magisterial authorities regarding the teachings and arguments of certain documents for the goal of better clarification and articulation of Catholic faith (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis* [1990] n. 30). Moreover, canon 212§ 3 of the *Codex Iuris Canonici* affirms the right and responsibility of all the Catholic faithful to communicate their opinions to the pastors of the Church:

> According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they [the faithful] possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion

> on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.

Therefore, in accordance with both *Donum Veritatis,* n. 30 and Canon 212, the International Marian Association Theological Commission, which consists of over forty theologians from fifteen countries, would like to note the *following elements in MPF we maintain are in need of substantial clarification and modification*.

I. The title Co-redemptrix

4. The DDF in n. 22 of MPF offers this perspective on the Co-redemptrix title:

> Given the necessity of explaining Mary's subordinate role to Christ in the work of Redemption, *it is always inappropriate* to use the title "Co-redemptrix" to define Mary's cooperation. This title risks obscuring Christ's unique salvific mediation and can therefore create confusion and an imbalance in the harmony of the truths of the Christian faith, for "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (*Acts* 4:12). When an expression requires many, repeated explanations to prevent it from straying from a correct meaning, it does not serve the faith of the People of God and becomes *unhelpful*. In this case, the expression "Co-redemptrix" does not help extol Mary as the first and foremost collaborator in the work of Redemption and grace, for it carries the risk of eclipsing the exclusive role of Jesus Christ — the Son of God made man for our salvation, who was the only one capable of offering the Father a sacrifice of infinite value — which would not be a true honor to his Mother.

It should first be noted that there is a significant inconsistency in the different translations of this text. The Italian, English, and German refer to the title as "always inappropriate" (*sempre inappropriate, immer unangebracht)* while the Spanish, French and Portuguese refer to it as "always inopportune" (*siempre inoportuno, toujours inopportune, sempre inoportuno*). To describe a title as "inappropriate" suggests that it is improper or unacceptable. To describe it as "inopportune" suggests that it is imprudent to use it. It should also be noted that the word "always" needs further clarification. If the title Co-redemptrix is *always* inappropriate or inopportune to use, then the popes who approved or used the title were acting in an inappropriate and imprudent manner. If it is *always* inappropriate to use the title, then the saints and mystics who used this title were irresponsible and inappropriate.

5. The DDF states that "when an expression requires many, repeated explanations to prevent it from straying from a correct meaning, it does not serve the faith of the People of God and becomes *unhelpful*." Many theological terms, though, require perennial explanation for those not familiar with them. For example, the title "Mother of God" has been rejected by some Christians because they think it means Mary precedes God. The Trinity requires repeated explanations, even for those who believe this revealed truth. The same could be said for other terms such as transubstantiation, papal infallibility and the Marian dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which require ongoing explanation even among the Catholic faithful. St. John Paul II, in his 2002

apostolic letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, notes that St. Bartolo Longo referred to Mary as "all-powerful by grace" (*omnipotens per gratiam*). John Paul II describes this as a "bold expression, which needs to be properly understood" (n. 16). This we believe should be the proper attitude regarding Co-redemptrix. It needs to be properly understood and explained, rather than rejected. Members of the IMA Theological Commission who have taught Mariology for decades certainly do not find the title Co-redemptrix "unhelpful." Once a proper explanation is provided, students are quick to understand and affirm the legitimacy of the title.

6. The DDF acknowledges that the titles "Redemptrix" and "Co-Redemptrix" have been used for centuries. It claims that Co-redemptrix was a "correction" of Redemptrix and yet St. Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church (1347–1380), referred to Mary as the "Redemptrix of the human race" (*Oratio* XI). The term Co-redemptrix came to be preferred— not as a correction of Redemptrix— but because the prefix co—from the Latin *cum* (with)—further emphasizes Mary's subordination and dependency on Christ, the Redeemer.

7. Another term used in the Church in reference to Mary is "Reparatrix," which is the theological equivalent of "Redemptrix." A number of popes in authoritative encyclical teachings have referred to Mary as the Reparatrix. In his 1854 Bull defining the Immaculate Conception, Blessed Pius IX said the Fathers of the Church "declared that the most glorious Virgin was Reparatrix of the first parents" (*fuisse parentum reparatricem*). In his 1895 encyclical, *Adiutricem*, Leo XIII refers to Mary as the "Reparatrix of the entire world" (*reparatricem totius orbis*: *ASS* 28 [1895–1895], 130–131). St. Pius X, in his 1904 encyclical, *Ad diem illum*, refers to Mary as "the Reparatrix of the lost world" (*reparatrice perditi orbis*: *ASS* 36 [1903–1904], 454). Pius XI, in his 1928 encyclical, *Miserentissimus Rex,* states that, because of Mary's union with Christ, "she likewise became and is piously called Reparatrix" *(Reparatrix item exstitit pieque appellatur*: *AAS 20* [1928] 178)**.** These popes do not call Mary the Co-reparatrix but simply the Reparatrix. This title is just as strong if not stronger than co-redemptrix and constitutes repeated papal magisterial teaching on a high level of the ordinary Magisterium.

8. *Mater Populi Fidelis*, 18 states that "Some popes have used the title 'Co-redemptrix' without elaborating on the meaning." Reference is made to seven uses of the title by St. John Paul II, the approvals of the title under St. Pius X, and the use of it by Pius XI (in endnote 33). What is unfortunately missing is Pope Leo XIII's July 18, 1885 approval of the Co-redemptrix title in some praises (*laudes)* to Jesus and Mary with an indulgence of 100 days granted by the Congregation for Indulgences and Sacred Relics. In the Italian version of the praises to Mary, she is referred to as "co-redemptrix of the world" (*corredentrice del mondo*). In the Latin version, she is referred to as the "*mundo redimendo coadiutrix*). Leo XIII approved both the Italian and Latin versions of the prayer (*Acta Sanctae Sedis* [*ASS]* 18 [1885] p. 93).

9. While it is appropriate that the DDF acknowledges papal uses of the title Co-redemptrix, it is unfortunate that these papal uses are not given greater respect or presence in the actual text. Fr. René Laurentin published a historical study on the Marian title of Co-redemptrix.[1] He traces the use of the title by saints, theologians, and spiritual writers. He mentions those who opposed the title, but he provides examples of papal approval and uses of the title in the 20th century. In light of these papal uses of Co-redemptrix, he writes that "it would at least be gravely temerarious to

[1] René Laurentin, *Le Titre de Coréredmptrice: Étude historique* (Rome: Editions "Marianum; Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines", 1951).

attack its legitimacy."[2] He also notes that "it is certain that the use of *co-redemptrix* is now *legitimate*."[3] A similar attitude of respect is shown by Fr. J. A. De Aldama, S.J. In the *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* (Madrid, 1950), Fr. De Aldama argues that Mary's cooperation in bringing about redemption—at least in a mediate way (*saltem mediate*)—is *de fide* (p. 372). He also states that Mary's immediate cooperation in the work of redemption is "a doctrine that is more in conformity with cited texts of the Roman Pontiffs" (*doctrina conformior textibus citatis SS. Pontificum*). As for the title "Co-redemptrix," Fr. De Aldama maintains that "it is certain that it can be correctly used and that it is not permitted to doubt its appropriateness" ("*Quod titulus Corredemptricis recte usurpetur, est certum; nec licet dubitare de eius opportunitate*;" (cf. *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, Vol III, Tract. II, p. 372). Reference to and respect for these leading Mariologists leading up to the Council serve an authentic *hermeneutic of continuity* so strongly supported by Pope Benedict XVI before and after the Council.

10. The DDF states that "The Second Vatican Council refrained from using the title [Co-redemptrix] for dogmatic, pastoral, and ecumenical reasons" (MPF, 18). This, though, is not entirely accurate. In the *praenotanda* to the 1962 schema on the Blessed Virgin, we are told that: "Certain terms and expressions used by Roman Pontiffs have been omitted, which, although most true in themselves (*in se verissima*), may be difficult for the separated brethren (such as the Protestants) to understand. Among such words the following may be enumerated: 'Coredemptrix of the human race' [St. Pius X, Pius XI]" (*Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, *Volumen* I, *Periodus Prima*, *Pars* IV [Vatican City, 1971], p. 99). Thus, the Marian title, Co-redemptrix, was omitted from the 1962 schema before ever reaching the Vatican Council Fathers themselves, because it was thought difficult for the separated brethren to understand. *It was not omitted for dogmatic reasons*. In fact, it was included among expressions that are "most true in themselves." It should also be noted that some prominent post conciliar theologians have argued that Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* explicitly affirms the doctrine of Mary as Co-redemptrix without using the term. Among these are Fr. Jean Galot, S.J., the papal writer for John Paul II, and Fr. Georges Cottier, O.P., the former theologian of the papal household (cf. Galot in *La Civilità Cattolica* [1994] III: 236-237 and Cottier, *in L'Osservatore Romano*, June 4, 2002).

It is also unusual that the DDF document essentially omits *Lumen Gentium* n. 58, which is arguably the most co-redemptive passage of *Lumen Gentium*'s chapter VIII concerning Mary. This passage highlights Mary's intimate union with her Son at Calvary, noting that she was "enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering,"; that she "associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart" and that Mary was "lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim born of her." This testifies to Mary's active and willed redemptive participation at Calvary, which in fact constitutes her coredemption.

11. The DDF states that popes have used the title Co-redemptrix "without elaborating much on its meaning" (MPF, 18). Certainly, popes understood the meanings of the titles they use, based on the Mariology articulated by contemporary theologians. The meaning of the term has been thoroughly explained by Mariologists such as François Xavier Godts C.S.s.R. (1839–1929), José A. De Aldama, S.J. (1903–1980), Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M. (1911–1990), and Gabriele M. Roschini,

[2] Ibid., p. 28: "*Il serait gravement téméraire, pour le moins, de s'attaquer à sa légitimité*."

[3] Ibid., p.36: "*Ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est l'emploi de corredemptrix est dès maintenant légitime*." It is very sad that Fr. Laurentin departed from his defense of Mary as "Co-redemptrix" in his later years.

O.S.M. (1900–1977). Moreover, *Pius XI did explain the meaning of the title* in his allocution to pilgrims from Vicenza on November 30, 1933:

> ***By necessity, the Redeemer could not but associate His Mother with His work, and for this reason, we invoke her under the title of Co-redemptrix***. (*Il Redentore non poteva, per necessità, non associare La Madre Sua alla Sua opera, e per questo noi la invochiamo col titolo di Corredentrice*) She gave us the Savior, she accompanied Him in the work of Redemption as far as the Cross itself, sharing with Him the sorrows of the agony and of the death in which Jesus consummated the Redemption of all mankind (*L'Osservatore Romano*, December 1, 1933, p. 1).

12. *St. John Paul II also explained Mary's role as Co-redemptrix* when speaking at a Marian sanctuary in Guayaquil, Ecuador on January 31, 1985:

> Mary goes before us and accompanies us. The silent journey that begins with her Immaculate Conception and passes through the "yes" of Nazareth, which makes her the Mother of God, finds on Calvary a particularly important moment. There also, *accepting and assisting at the sacrifice of her son*, Mary is the dawn of Redemption;;…*Crucified spiritually with her crucified son* (cf. Gal. 2:20), she contemplated with heroic love the death of her God, she "lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth" (*Lumen Gentium*, 58)…In fact, at Calvary *she united herself with the sacrifice of her Son that led to the foundation of the Church; her maternal heart shared to the very depths the will of Christ "to gather into one all the dispersed children of God"* (Jn. 11:52). *Having suffered for the Church*, Mary deserved to become the Mother of all the disciples of her Son, the Mother of their unity….The Gospels do not tell us of an appearance of the risen Christ to Mary. Nevertheless, as she was in a special way close to the Cross of her Son, she also had to have a privileged experience of his Resurrection. In fact, **Mary's role as Co-redemptrix *did not cease with the glorification of her Son***.[4]

Here we see that Mary's role as Co-redemptrix not only includes her "yes" at the Annunciation, but also her "accepting and assisting at the sacrifice of her Son." In his February 11, 1984 apostolic letter *Salvifici Doloris*, John Paul II explicitly recognizes the supernatural redemptive value of Mary's sacrifice:

> ... it was on Calvary that Mary's suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view but ***which was mysterious and supernaturally fruitful for the redemption of the world*.** Her ascent of Calvary and her standing at the foot of the Cross together with the Beloved Disciple were a special sort of sharing in the redeeming death of her Son (n. 25; emphasis added).

13. In endnote 32, *Mater Populi Fidelis* states that "Theologians understand the title 'Co-redemptrix in different ways." One of these ways is described as "*Immediate, Christo-typical, or maximalist cooperation*, which places Mary's cooperation as near, direct and immediate to Christ's

[4] John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, March 11, 1985, p. 7 [emphasis added]. It should be noted that in the original Spanish John Paul II spoke of the "co-redemptive role of Mary —*el papel corredentor de María* (*Inseg* VIII [1985], p. 319), which was translated in English as "Mary's role as Co-redemptrix." The meaning is the same.

Redemption (objective redemption)." The DDF explains that in this understanding, "Mary's merits, although subordinated to Christ's, would have a redemptive value for salvation." What the DDF describes as "maximalist" is *precisely what is taught by Pius XI, Pius XII, and John Paul II.* It is inaccurate for the DDF to say that "Some popes have used the title 'Co-redemptrix' without elaborating much on its meaning" (n. 18). Again, Pius XI and John Paul II explain Mary's role as Co-redemptrix quite clearly, and they do so in terms that the DDF describes as "*immediate, Christo-typical or maximalist cooperation*" (endnote 32).

14. One of the prominent doctrinal omissions in MPF is that, while it speaks of Mary's unique active role in the Redemption, *it never states that* ***Mary's unique active role is redemptive***. Many individuals had uniquely active roles in the Redemption. Some were in positive modes, such as the apostles, and others in negative modes, such as Pontius Pilate and Caiaphas. The Church, from the Fathers of the Church up to the modern and contemporary Papal Magisterium, teaches that **Mary's uniquely active role, as the human New Eve with Christ, the New Adam**, **offered a contribution to the obtaining of the graces of Redemption.** ***This she did by freely giving birth to our Redeemer; by persevering with him to the foot of the cross; by offering her immaculate human suffering together with his divine suffering, and by "lovingly consenting to the immolation of the victim born of her"*** *(Lumen Gentium, 58)*.

In his 1943 encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*, Pope Pius XII undeniably teaches that *Mary as the New Eve* ***offered Jesus to the Father, joined with her own motherly co-suffering and love, on behalf of all humanity in an act of objective redemption:***

It was she [Mary] who, always most intimately united with her Son, like a New Eve, offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father, together with the sacrifice of her maternal rights and love, on behalf of all the children of Adam, stained by the latter's shameful fall.[5]

In his 1954 encyclical, *Ad caeli Reginam*, Pius XII also explicitly teaches Mary's instrumentally redemptive role in salvation when he delineates "the unique manner in which [Mary] assisted in our redemption, by giving of her own substance, by freely offering Him for us, by her singular desire and petition for, and active interest in, our salvation."[6] Pius XII goes on to say:

> From these considerations, the proof develops on these lines: if Mary, *in taking an active part in the work of salvation,* was, by God's design, associated with Jesus Christ, the source of salvation itself, in a manner comparable to that in which Eve was associated with Adam, the source of death, so that it may be stated that *the work of our salvation was accomplished by a kind of "recapitulation" [St. Irenaeus] in which a virgin was instrumental in the salvation of the human race, just as a virgin had been closely associated with its death* [emphasis added].[7]

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[5] Pius XII, encyclical, *Mystici Corporis* (June 29, 1943), no. 110: *AAS* 35 (1943), 247.

[6] Pius XII, *Ad caeli Reginam* (October 11, 1954): *AAS* 46 [1954], 634; translation taken from Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann, eds., *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012) [henceforth D-H], no. 3914

[7] *Ad caeli Reginam*: *AAS* 46 [1954], 634–635; D-H, no. 3915. The reference to St. Irenaeus is to *Adversus haereses* V, 19, no. 1.

15. We believe that a Marian title used by popes, saints, and mystics should not be described as "always inappropriate." Was it inappropriate for saints like Padre Pio, Maximilian Kolbe, and Mother Teresa to use it? Was it inappropriate for Venerable Sister Lúcia of Fatima to use the title eight times in her *"Calls" from the Message of Fatima*?[8] What new insights have emerged in the few years since these great post-conciliar saints, as well as St. John Paul II, that make a title used by these popes, saints, and mystics to be described now as "always inappropriate?" This, rather, appears to be an anti-development of doctrine.

16. Oddly, the DDF appeals to some statements made by Cardinal Ratzinger in non-magisterial sources, and even within secular sources. The Feria IV meeting of February 21, 1996 concerned the proposal for a dogmatic definition of Mary as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces, and Advocate. The negative *votum* expressed by Cardinal Ratzinger concerned *the maturity of the proposed dogma at that time, some thirty years ago, and not a repudiation of the titles*. In fact, the DDF reports that Cardinal Ratzinger believed "the precise meaning of these titles is not clear" (MPF, 19). He did not describe them as "inappropriate." When he voiced his reservations about the title Co-redemptrix in a 2001 interview, he was speaking as a private theologian and not in an official or magisterial capacity. It is unusual that a DDF Note would quote at length a secular interview by a cardinal prefect, and at the same time, not include over ten papal usages of the same title. During his eight-year pontificate as Benedict XVI, Joseph Ratzinger never forbad anyone from using the title Co-redemptrix; nor did he ever speak against it, let alone determine it to be "always inappropriate."

17. MPF also quotes at length the *ex tempore* comments of Pope Francis during a homily, meditation, and a general audience. On the three occasions in which Pope Francis spoke about Mary and the title, "Co-redemptrix," he was speaking of Jesus in the strict sense as the only divine-human Savior of the human race. It is clear that he was rejecting any understanding of Mary as Co-redemptrix that would take away from Jesus, the one Redeemer, or would elevate Mary to a quasi-divine status. Read carefully and within their proper contexts, these statements of Pope Francis do not appropriately apply to the proper meaning of Mary as the Co-redemptrix, who is dependent, subordinate, and secondary to Christ.[9] It should again be noted that Pope Francis was speaking *ex tempore* (i.e., his comments were not present in their respective prepared texts) on these three occasions. According to Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium*, 25, religious assent to the ordinary papal Magisterium must take into account "the manner of speaking." Pope Francis's manner of speaking shows that he was spontaneously criticizing understandings of Co-redemptrix that take away from the redemptive work of the Incarnate Word or elevate Mary to a quasi-divine status.

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[8] See Sister Lucia, "*Calls" from the Message of Fatima*, translated by the Sisters of Mosteiro de Santa Maria and Convento de N.S. do Bom Successo, Lisbon [Authorized by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith] (Fatima, Portugal: Secretariado dos Pastorinhos, 2000), pages 115, 137, 178, 195, 266, 278, 279, and 294.

[9] See Mark Miravalle and Robert Fastiggi "Pope Francis and the coredemptive role of Mary, the 'Woman of salvation'" in *La Stampa Vatican Insider* [English Edition] January 8, 2020; "Papa Francesco e il ruolo corredentore di Maria, la 'Donna della salvezza'" in *La Stampa Vatican Insider* [Italian Edition] January 8, 2020) and Robert Fastiggi, "Pope Francis, the Humility of Mary and the role of 'Co-Redemptrix'" in *La Stampa Vatican Insider* [English Edition] April 19, 2020; "Papa Francesco, l'umiltà di Maria e il ruolo di 'corredentrice'" in *La Stampa Vatican Insider* [Italian Edition] April 19, 2020.

18. In sum, the IMA believes the Marian title Co-redemptrix should neither be described as "always inappropriate" nor "always inopportune." It is a title that has been approved and used by popes as well as by saints and mystics. It needs to be properly understood and explained like many other Catholic titles and doctrines, but a proper understanding will show that it is not a cause for confusion. Instead, the title communicates the truth of Mary's unique but subordinate cooperation in the redemptive work of Christ. The title Co-redemptrix corresponds to the perennial Catholic teaching about Mary as the New Eve. The great Mariologist, Gabriele Roschini (1900-1977) defined the title Co-redemptrix as follows: "The title Co-redemptrix of the human race means that the most holy Virgin cooperated with Christ in our reparation as Eve cooperated with Adam in our ruin" (Gabriele Maria Roschini, *Chi è Maria?: Catechismo mariano* quest. 83). Mary as the Co-redemptrix does not take away anything from Christ. Although God had no absolute need of Mary, he chose to associate her like no other creature in his work of Redemption (See St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, n. 14–15). In truth, the title "Co-redemptrix" is not difficult to understand once it is properly explained, which has been done successfully by the Church for over a half millennium.

II. Mary as the Mediatrix of All Graces

19. *Mater Populi Fidelis* in a generic way recognizes Mary's "participated mediation" with Christ's mediation (n. 33) as well as her maternal mediation (n. 34). The text, however*, seeks to reduce Mary's maternal mediation only to intercession*, i.e., as only a type of motherly Advocate. Moreover, the DDF distances itself from Mary as "the Mediatrix of all graces" because this title is "not clearly grounded in Revelation" (n. 45). MPF further states that the title has limits because it "does not favor a correct understanding of Mary's unique place" (n. 67), and it "risks presenting Mary as the one who distributes spiritual goods or energies apart from our personal relationship with Christ" (n. 68). The DDF believes the title, Mediatrix of all graces "does not favor a correct understanding of Mary's unique place" (n. 67).

20. Such an assessment, however, fails to take into account *the consistent papal teachings on Mary's universal mediation of grace going back to the 18th century and up to and including the pontificate of Pope Francis, several of which constitute authoritative encyclical instructions of the Papal Magisterium.* For example:

- Pope Benedict XIV in his 1748 Bull, *Gloriosae Dominae*, describes the Blessed Virgin as "a celestial stream through which the flow of all graces and gifts reach the soul of all wretched mortals." [10]
- Pope Pius VII*,* in his 1806 apostolic constitution, *Quod Divino afflata Spiritu*, refers to Mary as the "Dispensatrix of all graces."[11]
- Bl. Pope Pius IX, in his 1849 encyclical, *Ubi primum,* writes: "For God has committed to Mary the treasury of all good things, in order that everyone may know that through her are obtained every hope, every grace, and all salvation."[12]

[10] Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758), *Op. Omnia*, v. 16, ed., Prati, 1846, p.428.

[11] Pope Pius VII (1800-1823), *Ampliatio privilegiorum ecclesiae B.M. Virginis (Florentiae:* 1806), § 1.

[12] Pope Pius IX (1846-1878), encyclical letter, *Ubi Primum*, 1849: https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-ix/it/documents/enciclica-ubi-primum-2-febbraio-1849.html.

- Pope Leo XIII, in his 1891 encyclical, *Octobri mense,* writes: "Consequently, it may be affirmed with no less truth and justice that absolutely nothing from this immense treasury of all the graces brought forth by the Lord—inasmuch as 'grace and truth have come from Jesus Christ' [Jn 1:17]—is imparted to us, by the will of God, except through Mary (*nisi per Mariam*)."[13]
- St. Pius X, in his 1904 encyclical, *Ad diem illum*, speaks of Mary as "the supreme minister of the distribution of graces."[14](Denz.-H, 3370).
- In a 1919 decree anticipating the canonization of St. Joan of Arc, Benedict XV refers to Mary as "the Mediatrix of all graces" (*Mediatrix omnium gratiarum*).[15]
- In 1921 Pope Benedict XV approves the Mass and Office of the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces.[16]
- Pius XI, in his 1932 encyclical, *Caritate Christi compulsi*, points to the powerful patronage of the Virgin Mother of God, "the Mediatrix of all graces" (*Virginis Deiparae, omnium gratiarum Mediatricis*).[17]
- Pius XII, in his apostolic constitution, *Sedes sapientiae* of May 31, 1956, speaks of Mary as "the One who was constituted Mediatrix of all graces regarding sanctification (" … *quae gratiarum omnium ad sanctificationem spectatium Mediatrix constituta est* …").[18]
- St. John XXIII, in his May 26, 1961 apostolic letter, *Beatissimum Virginem Mariam*, grants the title of Minor Basilica to the Ugandan Church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces, Sultana of Africa. In this letter, he refers to "the Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces (*Virginem Mariam, Omnium Gratiarum Sequestram*).[19]
- St. Paul VI, in his 1965 encyclical, *Mense Maio*, says that "we must not forget that 'the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort,' (2 Cor 1:3) … has appointed Mary most holy as the generous administrator (*generosam administram*) of the gifts of his mercy."[20]
- St. John Paul II referred to Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces (or its equivalent) at least nine times.[21] For example, in his Angelus Address of January 17, 1988, he refers to the Egyptian Church of Our Lady in Medai as a shrine where many pilgrims come to entrust their intentions to "the Mediatrix of all graces" (*Mediatrice di tutte le grazie*).[22]
- Pope Benedict XVI, in his January 10, 2013 Letter to Archbishop Sigismundo Zimowski (who was representing the Holy See for the celebration of the 21st World Day of the Sick), commends his mission "by imploring the prayers and intercessions of the Blessed Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mediatrix of all graces" (*implenda precibus comitamur atque*

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[13] Pope Leo XIII, encyclical, *Octobri mense* (September 22, 1891): Denz.-H, 3274.

[14] Pius X, encyclical, *Ad diem illum* (February 2, 1904): Denz.-H, 3370.

[15] *La Documentation Catholique* I (1919), 322; see also Fr. Manfred Hauke, *Mary, Mediatress of Grace* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2004), 52.

[16] Hauke, 55–56.

[17] *AAS* 24 (1932), p.192.

[18] *AAS* 48 (1956), p. 354.

[19] *AAS* 54 (1962), p. 150.

[20] *AAS* 57 (1965), p.357.

[21] Msgr. Arthur B. Calkins, "Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces, in the Papal Magisterium of Pope John Paul II," in *Mary at the Foot of the Cross–VII: Coredemptrix, Therefore Mediatrix of All Graces* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2008), 51–54.

[22] John Paul II, Angelus Address (January 17, 1988): https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/angelus/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_19880117.html.

intercessioni Beatae Virginis Mariae Immaculatae, Mediatricis omnium gratiarum, commendamus).[23]

- Pope Francis, in his May 13, 2023 Message to Archbishop Gian Franco Saba of Sassari, Sardina, Italy, notes that "One of the most ancient titles by which Christians have invoked the Virgin Mary is precisely 'the Mediatrix of all graces.'"[24]

21. It is unfortunate that the DDF would choose to omit repeated teachings and references of twelve popes over four centuries of what constitute numerous higher-level expressions of ordinary Papal Magisterium concerning the Catholic doctrinal teaching of Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces, technically each of which individually carry greater magisterial weight than a single dicastery note.

In light of this, it raises the question upon what authoritative theological basis can the DDF express its opinion that the Mediatrix of all graces title "does not favor a correct understanding of Mary's unique place" (n. 67)? As with the title Co-redemptrix, surely the popes who referred to Mary as "the Mediatrix of all graces" understood what they were saying. While there can be different ways of expressing Mary's universal mediation of grace, the perennial papal affirmation of Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces, that *every grace which originates in God comes to us through at least the willed intercessory mediation of Mary as a true secondary cause must remain our foundation for doctrinal belief*. The many papal references to Mary's universal mediation of grace as well as a papally approved feast of Mary as Mediatrix *of all graces* (Benedict XV, 1921), clearly establish the legitimacy of this title and role. *The IMA respectfully requests that a future magisterial statement be issued that will affirm this longstanding doctrinal teaching and the right of the faithful to return to an ecclesial celebration of Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces.*

22. The DDF argues that Mary cannot be the Mediatrix of all graces because "she, the first redeemed, could not have been the mediatrix of the grace that she herself received" (n. 67). This constitutes no true objection to the title and role because as it is magisterially understood and properly articulated, *Mary mediates all the graces of Redemption from Christ to sinful humanity*, and not to herself. It is the common consensus of theologians who correctly teach Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces, such as Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (1877–1964), that this does not refer to Mary mediating the grace of her Immaculate Conception to herself. They do, however, teach and defend the doctrine as consistently taught by the Papal Magisterium that she mediates all fruits of Redemption to fallen humanity as Mediatrix of all graces and Spiritual Mother of all humanity.[25]

23. The DDF mentions the petition of Cardinal Mercier (1851–1926) for a dogmatic definition of Mary's universal mediation of grace (MPF, n. 23). The DDF goes on to state that Benedict XV "did not grant this request; he only approved a feast with its own Mass and Office of Mary

[23] Benedict XVI, letter (January 10, 2013): https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/la/letters/2013/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20130110_card-zimowski.html.

[24] Pope Francis, Message for the "Festa del Voto" in Sassari, Sardinia, Italy (May 13, 2023): https://www.arcidiocesisassari.it/2023/05/28/festa-del-voto-il-messaggio-del-santo-padre/22881/.

[25] See Manfred Hauke, *Mary, Mediatress of Grace* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2004), 116. See also Sr. Florence Coomans, *Marie Médiatrice de Toutes Grâces Dans La Commission Pontificale Instituée par Pie XI (1922): Éclairages et perspectives théologiques* (Lugano: Cantagalli EU Press FTL, 2025), 338 and Gloria Falcão Dodd, *The Mediatrix of All Grace: History and Theology of the Virgin Mary: Movement for a Dogmatic Definition from 1896 to 1964* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2012), 399.

Mediatrix" (MPF, n. 23), but in fact *it was the feast of the very title they argue against, i.e., the Feast of Mary as Mediatrix of all graces.* Only in endnote 46 is this feast properly identified as the Office and Mass of Mary "Mediatrix of All Graces." The DDF, moreover, fails to mention the three pontifical commissions established by Pius XI, which met in three locations: Belgium, Spain, and Rome, and the fact that the Spanish and Belgium commissions produced over 2,000 pages of theological support in favor of the solemn papal definition of Mary's universal mediation of grace. The Roman commission had at least one principal objector for ecumenical reasons, and therefore Pius XI decided not to issue the requested dogmatic proclamation. He was himself, though, favorable to Mary as Mediatrix of all graces. In his 1932 encyclical, *Caritate Christi compulsi*, he refers to the Virgin Mother of God, "the Mediatrix of all graces" (*Virginis Deiparae, omnium gratiarum Mediatricis*).[26]

A. The question of Mary's instrumental and secondary causality of grace

24. *Mater Populi Fidelis* does not believe we should understand Marian mediation in terms of instrumental or secondary causality. In n. 65 it says:

> Any other way of understanding Mary's cooperation in the order of grace —especially if one intends to attribute to her some form of a perfective intervention, perfective instrumentality, or secondary causality in the communication of sanctifying grace must pay special attention to some criteria that were already implied in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*…

The DDF continues in 65a with this observation:

> a) We must reflect on how Mary fosters our "immediate union" with the Lord which the Lord himself produces by conferring grace and which we can receive only from God and not think of our union with Mary as being more immediate than our union with Christ. This risk is present, above all, in the notion that Christ gives us Mary as an instrument or as a secondary and perfecting cause in the communication of his grace.

While it is true that grace only comes from God, *Mary's mediation of grace in an instrumental or secondary way in no way denies this* or runs contrary to it. In his 1904 encyclical, *Ad diem illum*, St. Pius X clearly teaches *both truths that grace comes only from God but also the secondary causality of Mary in the communication of grace*:

> It cannot, of course, be denied that the dispensation of these treasures is the particular and peculiar right of Jesus Christ, for they are the exclusive fruit of his death, who by his nature is the mediator between God and man. Nevertheless, by this companionship in sorrow and suffering already mentioned between the Mother and the Son, it has been allowed to the august Virgin to be the most powerful mediatrix and advocate of the whole world with her

[26] *AAS* 24 (1932), p.192. See also, Manfred Hauke, *Mary, Mediatress of Grace* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2004), p. 116 and following; and Gloria Falcão Dodd, *The Mediatrix of All Grace: History and Theology of the Virgin Mary: Movement for a Dogmatic Definition from 1896 to 1964* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2012), p.399 and following.

> Divine Son (Pius IX. *Ineffabilis*). The source, then, is Jesus Christ "of whose fullness we have all received" (*John* 1:16), "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied … makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love (*Eph* 4: 16). But Mary … is the aqueduct (St. Bernard of Clairvaux), or rather also the neck (St. Bernardine of Siena), by which the head is joined to the body … We are then, it will be seen, very far from attributing to the Mother of God a productive power of grace, a power which belongs to God alone. Yet, since Mary carries it over all in holiness and union with Jesus Christ, and has been associated by Jesus Christ in the work of redemption, she merits for us *de congruo* [in a congruous manner] in the language of theologians, what Jesus Christ merits for us *de condigno* [in a condign manner] and she is the supreme minister of the distribution of graces.[27]

St. Pius X makes it clear that Mary's mediation or dispensation of grace in no way implies that she is the productive cause of grace. Her mediation can be understood through the images of an aqueduct or neck by which the grace that comes from Christ is communicated or distributed to the faithful. Pius X also clearly establishes the *essential link between Mary's unique coredemptive role with Jesus as the foundation of her consequent role in the mediation of grace*.

25. The DDF continues with this caution in 65b:

> The Second Vatican Council highlighted that "the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God." This influence can be thought of only in light of God's free decision, who — although his own action is overflowing and superabundant — freely and gratuitously wills to associate Mary with his work. Therefore, it is not acceptable to present Mary's action as if God needed her to accomplish salvation.

The doctrinal teaching of Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces does not deny that her influence on men "originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God." This is clearly articulated both by the Papal Magisterium and in the writings of the saints. For example, St. Louis de Montfort teaches that God had no absolute need of Mary (*True Devotion to Mary*, 14, 21), but this does not prevent him from stating that: "No heavenly gift is given to men that does not pass through her virginal hands" (*True Devotion*, n. 25).

Still, the DDF believes that we should not understand Mary as "the instrumental agent" of God's free bestowal of grace because this implies that she is parallel to Christ or that she supplants or supplements the action of Christ. In 65c, the DDF offers this warning:

> c) We must understand Mary's mediation not as a complementary aid that would enable God to work fully, with greater richness, and more beauty; instead, her mediation must be understood in such a way that "it neither takes away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ, the one Mediator." When explaining Mary's mediation, it must be emphasized that God alone is our Savior and that it is God alone who applies the

[27] Pius X, encyclical, *Ad diem illum* (February 2, 1904); AAS 36 [1903/1904], 453f; translation taken from D-H, no. 3370. The reference to St. Bernard of Clairvaux is from his homily for the Feast of Mary's Nativity *De aquae*ductu, no. 4; the reference to St. Bernardine of Siena is from *Quadragesimale de evangelio aeterno*, sermo 51, art. 3, a. 1.

> merits of Jesus Christ, the only merits that are necessary and entirely sufficient for our justification. Mary does not supplant the Lord in any action he has not already done (i.e., she does not take anything away from him) nor does she supplement him (i.e., she does not add to him). Since she does not add anything to Christ's salvific mediation in the communication of grace, she should not be regarded as the instrumental agent of that free bestowal. If she accompanies an action of Christ — by virtue of his own work — she should never be thought of as being parallel to him. Rather, being associated with Christ, Mary is the recipient of a gift from her Son that places her beyond herself, a gift that enables her to accompany the Lord's work with her maternal character. We return, then, to the safest point, which is Mary's contribution in preparing us to receive God's sanctifying grace; in that context, one can indeed think of her as acting to contribute something of her own insofar as she "can cause some disposition" to others. For "it belongs to the highest power to reach the last end, while the lower powers contribute to the attainment of that last end, by preparing one for it."

Once again, Mary's secondary instrumental mediation of grace does not take away from Christ, the one divine Mediator. It is true that "God alone is the Savior," but Mary's instrumental and secondary mediation of Christ's grace does not deny this. As God has freely chosen to associate Mary with his work of Redemption, then he is free to communicate his grace to us through her secondary instrumental causality. To say that "God alone is our Savior" does not mean that "it is God alone who applies the merits of Jesus" to us. God is sovereign. When he chooses to make use of Mary as an instrument to apply his grace, that is his providential choice. Mary's instrumental mediation of grace does not imply that she supplants or adds something to the grace of Christ.

The grace of Christ is also communicated by the sacraments. St. Thomas Aquinas states that "if we hold that a sacrament is an instrumental cause of grace, we must needs allow that there is in the sacraments a certain instrumental power of bringing about the sacramental effects" (ST III, q., 62 a. 5). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the sacraments "are signs and instruments by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ the Head throughout the Church which is his Body" (n. 774). *If the sacraments can be instruments of the grace of Christ, then certainly Mary can be an instrument of grace*. Pius XII, in his 1954 encyclical, *Ad Caeli Reginam*, confirms this truth:

> For if through His Humanity the divine Word performs miracles and gives graces, if He uses His Sacraments and Saints as instruments for the salvation of men, why should He not make use of the role and work of His most holy Mother in imparting to us the fruits of redemption? [28]

26. According to Pius XII, the sacraments mediate grace because they are used by God as instruments of his grace. The Church, as "the universal sacrament of salvation" is used by God to mediate grace. In a similar way, the Blessed Virgin Mary is used by God as an instrument of the Holy Spirit in the subordinate mediation of grace. In his General Audience of November 13, 2024, Pope Francis refers to the Mother of God as "an instrument of the Holy Spirit in His work of sanctification." The work of sanctification takes place in human souls. If the Mother of God is an

[28] Pius XII, encyclical, *Ad Caeli Reginam* (Oct. 11, 1954); *AAS* 46 (1954), p. 636.

instrument of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of souls, then she is also a Mediatrix of the grace that sanctifies souls.

27. It is worthy of special attention that Pope Benedict XVI, in his May 11, 2007 homily for the Mass and canonization of Fr. Antônio de Sant'Ana Galvão in São Paulo, Brazil, stated that *"there is no fruit of grace in the history of salvation that does not have as its necessary instrument the mediation of Our Lady*."[29] According to Benedict XVI, Mary's mediation of grace, with and under Christ, the one Mediator, is a necessary instrument for the fruit of grace. Certainly, Mary can intercede to prepare us to receive sanctifying grace. Benedict XVI, though, teaches that Mary is a necessary instrument for the fruit of grace. Utilizing all the correct theological terms, "grace" "necessary instrumentality" and "mediation," Pope Benedict in a single quote provides an authoritative correction to MFP in its repeated denial that Mary enacts a true secondary causality in the mediation of all graces.

It is once again clear that popes have directly and repeatedly affirmed that Mary is an instrument used by God for the mediation of grace. Mary's mediation is always a participation in the one mediation of Christ. To affirm Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces in no way implies that she adds to or takes away from Christ the one Mediator. Popes, saints, and theologians who universally teach Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces make it clear that Mary's universal mediation of grace is not by some inner necessity but by the will of God. This is what Leo XIII teaches in his 1891 apostolic letter, *Octobri mense,* when he writes: "Consequently, it may be affirmed with no less truth and justice that absolutely nothing from this immense treasury of all the graces brought forth by the Lord—inasmuch as 'grace and truth have come from Jesus Christ' [Jn 1:17]—is imparted to us, *by the will of God*, except through Mary (*nisi per Mariam*)."[30]

The DDF's Note posits Mary's mediation only as some form of prayerful intercession that prepares human souls to receive graces. It fails to affirm the active and causal secondary mediation of Mary in the distribution of graces. Again, this position taken by the DDF Note does not appear reconcilable with papal doctrine.

B. The confusion between the meditation of grace and the original action of grace

28. The DDF, in *Mater Populi Fidelis*, takes great pains to explain that "no creature can confer grace" (n. 51) and that "Only God is capable of entering so deeply, to sanctify us to the point of becoming *absolutely immediate* to us" (n. 50). This leads to the conclusion that: "In the perfect immediacy between a human being and God, not even Mary can intervene" (n. 54). Mary, therefore, does not cooperate in the communication of grace but only assists by "her maternal intercession" (n. 54).

What is said in *Mater Populi Fidelis* is similar to what Cardinal Fernández said in his July 5, 2024 Letter to the Bishop of Brescia in which he affirms that nothing stands in the way (*nihil obstat*) for the faithful to believe in the "Rosa Mystica" apparitions received by Pierina Gilli (1911–1991) at Fontanelle di Montichiari, Italy. In this letter, Cardinal Fernández seeks to clarify various expressions in Pierina's *Diaries* such as "Mary of Grace" and "Mary Mediatrix," and he provides this commentary:

[29] Benedict XVI, homily in, São Paulo, Brazil (May 11, 2007), (emphasis added).
[30] Pope Leo XIII, encyclical, *Octobri mense* (September 22, 1891): D-H, 3274 (emphasis added).

> At the same time, it must be maintained that only the Lord can act in people's hearts by bestowing sanctifying grace that uplifts and transforms, because sanctifying grace is "first and foremost the gift of the *Spirit* who justifies and sanctifies us" (*CCC*, no. 2003; emphasis added), "it is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of *his* own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul" (*CCC*, no. 1999; emphasis added). *In this action, which only God can do in the depths without overlooking our freedom, there is no other possible mediation, not even that of the Blessed Virgin Mary.* Her cooperation is always to be understood in the sense of her maternal intercession and in the context of her helping to create provisions for us to be open to the action of sanctifying grace. The Second Vatican Council explained that since God "elicits in his creatures a manifold cooperation, which is but a sharing in this one source," for this reason, "the Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary (LG, 62) [emphasis added].

Certainly, only God is capable of sanctifying souls with his original action and gift of divine grace. Yet, this does not exclude Mary's *mediation* of the divine grace that sanctifies us. Again, in the DDF Rosa Mystica statement, we read that "in this action [of sanctifying grace], which only God can do in the depths without overlooking our freedom, there is no other possible mediation, not even that of the Blessed Virgin Mary." The mediation of divine grace by Mary, though, does not mean that she is the source, original action, or the power of divine grace. Instead, it means, that she is universally active in the mediation of the divine grace that sanctifies us.

29. *Mater Populi Fidelis* notes that only God "enters into us and transforms us, making us sharers in his divine life" (n. 55). However, the Church has also taught that Mary directly cooperates in the sanctification of souls. Mary's *mediation* of grace is not the same as the divine *action* of grace. Mary's mediation of grace is united to God's action in the sanctification of souls, but it is always a subordinate and dependent cooperation with God's action. St. Paul VI, in his 1967 apostolic exhortation, *Signum Magnum*, emphatically teaches that Mary's *direct maternal cooperation in the birth and development in the divine life of souls* "must be held *as faith* by all Christians:"

> Indeed, just as no human mother can limit her task to the generation of a new man but must extend it to the function of nourishing and educating her offspring, thus the blessed Virgin Mary, after participating in the redeeming sacrifice of the Son, and in such an intimate way as to deserve to be proclaimed by Him the Mother not only of His disciple John but—may we be allowed to affirm it—of mankind which he in some way represents, now continues to fulfill from heaven her maternal function **as the cooperator in the birth and development of divine life in the individual souls of redeemed men**. This is a most consoling truth which, by the free consent of God the All-Wise, is an integrating part of the mystery of human salvation; **therefore it must be held as faith by all Christians** (emphasis added; the Latin reads: *ab omnibus christianis debet fide teneri*.).[31]

St. Paul VI reaffirms Mary's cooperation in the birth and development of divine life in human souls in his June 30, 1968 *Credo of the People of God*:

[31] Paul VI, apostolic exhortation, *Signum Magnum* (May 13, 1967), Part I, n.1; available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19670513_signum-magnum.html.

> Joined by a close and indissoluble bond to the Mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, the Blessed Virgin, the Immaculate, was at the end of her earthly life raised body and soul to heavenly glory and likened to her risen Son in anticipation of the future lot of all the just; and we believe that the Blessed Mother of God, the New Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven her maternal role with regard to Christ's members, ***cooperating with the birth and growth of divine life in the souls of the redeemed*** (emphasis added).[32]

If Mary cooperates with the birth and growth of divine life in the souls of the redeemed, she therefore must be intimately involved in the mediation of the sanctifying grace of God in individual souls. Her mediation of grace is, as *Lumen Gentium*, 62 teaches, a sharing or "participated cooperation" in the one source of Christ's unique mediation (*participatam ex unico fonte cooperationem*). *Lumen Gentium*, 63 states that

> The Son whom she [Mary] brought forth is He whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren (cf. Rom 8: 29), that is, the faithful ***in whose generation and formation she co-operates with a mother's love*** (*Filium autem peperit, quem Deus posuit primogenitum in multis fratribus [cf. Rom 8:29], fidelibus nempe, cooperator* ***ad quos gignendos et educandos materno amore*** (emphasis added).

Mater Populi Fidelis speaks in general of the spiritual motherhood of Mary, but it reduces it to a type of intercession that only encourages us "to open our hearts to Christ's activity in the Holy Spirit" (MPF, n. 46). What is missing is a true presentation of Mary's authentic spiritual motherhood, which includes her maternal role in the spiritual conception, generation, birth and nourishment of souls. As *Lumen Gentium* instructs, Mary cooperates with Christ "in giving back supernatural life to souls" (*Lumen Gentium*, 61).

30. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 501 cites *Lumen Gentium*, 63 to show that Mary's "spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom He came to save." As the spiritual Mother of all the saved, Mary participates and cooperates "in the birth and development of divine life in the individual souls of redeemed men" (St. Paul VI, *Signum Magnum,* part I, n.1).

31. St. John Paul II, in his 1987 encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater*, likewise points to Mary's intimate union with Christ in the sanctification of souls:

> In fact the Council teaches that the "motherhood of Mary in the order of grace...will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect" (*Lumen Gentium*, 62). With the redeeming death of her Son, ***the maternal mediation of the handmaid of the Lord took on a universal dimension***, for the work of redemption embraces the whole of humanity. Thus there is manifested in a singular way the efficacy of the one and universal mediation of Christ "between God and men" ***Mary's cooperation shares, in its subordinate character, in the universality of the mediation of the Redeemer, the one Mediator.*** This is clearly indicated by the Council in the words quoted above (emphasis added).[33]

[32] Paul VI, *Credo of the People of God* (June 30, 1968), no. 15; *AAS* 60 (1968), p. 439.
[33] John Paul II, encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater* (March 25, 1987), no. 40.

If the Virgin Mary's maternal mediation of grace is universal, then it cannot be excluded in the sanctification of souls. St. John Paul II teaches: "Mary's cooperation shares, in its subordinate character, in the *universality of the mediation of the Redeemer*, the one Mediator."

32. The DDF objects to a "Neoplatonic-like outpouring of grace by stages, as if God's grace were descending through various intermediaries (such as Mary) while its ultimate source (God) remained disconnected from our hearts" (n. 55). We do not understand, though, how God's choice to mediate grace through Mary implies that he is disconnected from our hearts. In his 1894 encyclical, *Iucunda Semper*, Leo XIII teaches:

> Thus is confirmed that law of merciful meditation of which We have spoken, and which St. Bernardine of Siena thus expresses: "Every grace granted to man has three degrees in order; for by God it is communicated to Christ, from Christ it passes to the Virgin, and from the Virgin it descends to us." And we, by the very form of the Rosary, do linger longest, and, as it were, by preference upon the last and lowest of these steps, repeating by decades the Angelic Salutation, so that with greater confidence we may thence attain to the higher degrees-that is, may rise, by means of Christ, to the Divine Father. For if thus we again and again greet Mary, it is precisely that our failing and defective prayers may be strengthened with the necessary confidence; as though we pledged her to pray for us, and as it were in our name, to God (n. 5).

According to Leo XIII and other papal teachings, the mediation of grace through Mary does not imply that God is disconnected from our hearts. Instead, it affirms the role of Mary in leading us "by means of Christ, to the Divine Father."

III. Mary's merit and our merit

33. *Mater Populi Fidelis*, n. 47 cites St. Thomas Aquinas to remind us that human beings cannot merit in the strict sense (*de condigno*) and that "Mary's fullness of grace exists because she received it freely, before any action on her own part, 'in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race.'" While this is true, ***the emphasis on Christ's merit is used against the legitimacy of the true human merit of Mary***. Again, in his 1904 encyclical, *Ad diem illum*, Pius X taught:

> Yet, since Mary carries it over all in holiness and union with Jesus Christ, and has been associated by Jesus Christ in the work of redemption, she merits for us *de congruo* [in a congruous manner] in the language of theologians, what Jesus Christ merits for us *de condigno* [in a condign manner] and she is the supreme minister of the distribution of graces.[34]

Pius X speaks of Mary's congruous merit with respect to her association with Christ in the work of Redemption; *Mater Populi Fidelis,* however, seems to reduce Mary's merit to her intercessory desires, which God can fulfill in a congruous way (n. 48). It is certainly true that God will respond to Mary's desires expressed through her prayers. *What is missing, though, is an affirmation of the true merit of Mary in the objective work of Redemption*. The Council of Trent taught that we, by our good works— which we perform through the grace and merits of Jesus Christ—can "truly

[34] Pius X, encyclical, *Ad diem illum* (February 2, 1904); D-H, no. 3370.

merit an increase of grace, eternal life, and (provided [we die] in the state of grace) the attainment of this eternal life, as well as an increase in glory" (D-H, 1582). *Although our merits are dependent on the grace of Christ, they are still our valid human merits granted by God in his infinite generosity* (D-H, 1582). If we, by our goods works, have true merit before God, how much more does Mary have true merit. Mary, therefore, by her good works, certainly had her own merit, and, as St. Pius X teaches, she merits for us *de congruo* what Jesus Christ merits for us *de condigno*.

34. Minimizing Mary's merits also *undermines all human merit and cooperation in the work of Redemption.* The Church has rightly taught that by uniting our sufferings to those of Christ we can become "co-redeemers of humanity." St. John Paul II, when speaking to the sick at the Fatebenefratelli Hospital on April 5, 1981, invited them to unite their sufferings to the passion of Christ as "co-redeemers of humanity" (*corredentori dell'umanità*).[35]

In his address to the sick after a general audience given January 13, 1982, John Paul II again invites the sick to unite their sorrows and sufferings to those of Cross to become co-redeemers of humanity together with Christ.[36]

In his address to the Bishops of Uruguay gathered in Montevideo concerning candidates for the priesthood, May 8, 1988, John Paul II says:

> The candidate must be irreproachable (1 Tim 3:2) St. Paul admonishes again. Personal spiritual direction must cultivate in them an immeasurable love for Christ and his Mother, and an immense yearning to be intimately associated with the work of co-redemption (*de asociarse íntimamente a la obra de la corredención*).[37]

Along the same lines, Pope Benedict XVI, when blessing the sick at Fatima on May 13, 2010, reminded them that if their sufferings are united to Christ they can "become—according to his design— a means of redemption for the whole world." He then told them: "You will be redeemers in the Redeemer, just as you are sons with the Son." [38] If we can be "co-redeemers of humanity" and "redeemers with the Redeemer," how much more can Mary be the unparalleled immaculate Co-redemptrix of humanity.[39]

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[35] John Paul II, address at Fatebenefratelli Hospital (April 5, 1981): https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1981/april/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19810405_fatebenefratelli.html.

[36]John Paul II, General Audience (January 13, 1982): https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1982/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19820113.html.

[37] John Paul II, Address to the Bishops of Uruguay at the Apostolic Nunciature in Montevideo, Uruguay (May 8, 1988): https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/speeches/1988/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19880508_vescovi-nunziatura.html.

[38] Benedict XVI, Address during the Blessing of the Sick after Mass at Fatima (May 13, 2010): https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100513_fatima.html.

[39] The rejection of the terminology of co-redemption is justified in MPF by the biblical Christological statement that "there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we ought to be saved" (Acts 4:12). But one must wonder why it has completely passed over the New Testament biblical texts that teach that *Christians can also participate in the salvation of others*, such as when St. Paul declares in 1 Cor 9:22: "To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all

IV. Minimizing Mary's role in God's plan of Redemption

35. *Mater Populi Fidelis* tells us that: "Our salvation is solely the work of the saving grace of Christ and of no one else (n. 47). In a strict sense this is true because only Christ, as the God-man, could offer a redemptive sacrifice for our sins. In another sense, though, it is not true from an authentically Catholic perspective. God from all eternity predestined Mary "by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God" (*Lumen Gentium*, 61). St. Thomas Aquinas taught that God in his omnipotence could have saved the human race in many ways (ST III, q. 1 a. 20.). God, though, chose to redeem us by becoming incarnate of the Virgin Mary. God, therefore, willed that our salvation involve the free cooperation of Mary, the New Eve. All of this is clearly taught in *Lumen Gentium*, 56:

> The Father of mercies willed that the incarnation should be preceded by the acceptance of her who was predestined to be the mother of His Son, so that just as a woman contributed to death, so also a woman should contribute to life. … Thus Mary, a daughter of Adam, consenting to the divine Word, became the mother of Jesus, the one and only Mediator. Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under Him and with Him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption. Rightly therefore the holy Fathers see her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she "being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race." (*Adv. Haer*. III, 22, 4)

The Church teaches, in continuity with St. Irenaeus from the second century, that Mary is a "cause" of our salvation. According to God's will, ***our salvation is the work of Christ, the God-man and New Adam and the redemptive cooperation of Mary, the New Eve.*** This cooperation was not just at the Annunciation but throughout her whole life in union with her Son. Her union with Christ was experienced in a profound way at Calvary. Benedict XV in his 1918 apostolic letter, *Inter Sodalicia*, writes:

> The fact that she was with Him crucified and dying, was in accord with the divine plan. For with her suffering and dying Son, Mary endured suffering and almost death. She gave up her Mother's rights over her Son to procure the salvation of mankind; and, to appease the divine justice, she, as much as she could, immolated her Son, so that **one can truly affirm that together with Christ she has redeemed the human race.**[40] **(***AAS* 10, 1918, 182**).**

V. Pastoral Concerns for the holy People of God

36. The following pastoral effects of the MPF document must also be seriously considered:

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means **save** some" (cfr. also: Rom 11:13–14; 1 Tim 4:16; 1 Cor 7:16; James 5:19–20; Jude 22–23). If Christians are called to cooperate in God's work of redemption by saving others, *a fortiori* it must be said of Mary, but in a higher manner.

[40] Benedict XV, Apostolic Letter, *Inter Sodalicia* (March 2, 1918): *AAS* 10, 1918, 182.

A) Marian devotions rooted in Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces. As each Marian devotional practice must have its basis in authentic Marian doctrine (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 66, 67) the doctrinal basis for many Marian devotional practices— such as Marian Consecration, the Rosary, Scapular, etc.— rests, properly understood, upon the doctrine of Mary as Mediatrix of all graces, which in turn is founded upon Marian coredemption. To reject these Magisterial doctrines is to throw many Marian practices of the Catholic faithful into unnecessary confusion and doubt. These are devotions consistently honored by the Church and encouraged by the popes. Is it the desire of the DDF to cease these international and efficacious Marian devotions and associations among the People of God, e.g., the international *Militia Immaculatae*? There are also Marian prayers and devotions, such as those connected to the Miraculous Medal and the 1830 apparitions to St. Catherine Labouré, that clearly are founded on the doctrine of Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces. The new DDF Note will sadly threaten these and other such prayers and devotions of the faithful globally.

B) The effect on religious communities that use the title, Co-redemptrix. There are a number of approved religious communities that use the title "Co-redemptrix." Here are some examples:

> *Congregazione Figlie Maria SS. Corredentrice*: founded in Catania, Italy in 1953; approved in 1964.
> *Pia Associazione di Maria SS. Corredentrice*: approved by the Archbishop of Reggio Calabria, Italy, in 1984.
> *Hijas de Maria Immaculada y Corredentora* (Lima, Peru): founded in 1978, approved in 1980.
> *Instituto de Misioneras de Maria Corredentora* (Ecuador): founded in 1964, approved in 1969.
> *Asociación de Fieles al Servicio de María Corredentora y Reina de la Paz* (Venezuela): founded in 1992 and approved then by the Archbishop of Barquisimeto, Venezuela.

Will these communities now be forced to change their names?

C) The effect on the 10 million members of the Legion of Mary. The *Handbook* of the Legion has ten references to Mary as Mediatrix of all graces.[41] Will the Legion of Mary be forced to change its *Handbook* and prayers that honor Mary as "Mediatrix of all graces?" The Legion of Mary is particularly strong in parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The DDF's opposition to Mary as "Mediatrix of all graces" will cause confusion and pain to these faithful Catholics.

D) The effect on the Basilica of Our Lady of All Graces in Brazil. In 1987 the shrine in Brazil of Our Lady, Mediatrix of all Graces in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, was recognized by the Holy See as a Minor Basilica.[42] Will this Basilica be forced to change its name?

E) The effect on the faithful's confidence in the Papal Magisterium. Perhaps most foundationally important is the effect on the faithful's trust in the Magisterium. If prior

[41] A PDF of the revised 2024 Handbook of the Legion of Mary is available at: https://legionofmary.ie/publications/details/legion-of-mary-handbook-revised-january-2024.
[42] More information about the Basilica of Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Graces, can be found in Portuguese on this site: https://www.basilicasm.com/.

teachings and titles used by popes are now considered "inappropriate" or "inopportune," why should the faithful have confidence in the papal Magisterium? Confusion and frustration in this domain are already being voiced by the People of God both in international Catholic and secular media.

37. Certain theologians proximate to the DDF document have publicly stated that the use of the Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces titles leads to "distortion" of the Christian message and even to "a superstitious view."[43] This would then indicate that St. John Paul II's and Pius XI's usages would also be condemnatory as Christian distortion and superstition. Such extreme comments exponentially contribute to confusion and even scandal for the Christian faithful, especially when applied to titles used by popes. Such comments are themselves theologically and pastorally "unhelpful."

38. Further theological commentary close to the DDF document suggests that a "reverse analogy" be incorporated that would expansively distance Jesus Christ as God from the human Mary.[44] Such a proposal is in opposition to the relational unity expressed by Marian titles like Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces. Such abstract efforts are meant to avoid potential "quasi-Savior" misunderstandings of Mary, but they ultimately undermine fundamental Incarnational theology. *Mater Populi Fidelis* speaks of the "infinite distance between our nature and the divine life" (n. 48), citing St. Thomas Aquinas (ST I-II. q. 114, a.1). Aquinas, though, was only asserting that human merit depends on God. He was not denying true human merit or the mediation of grace. The emphasis on the infinite distance between God and humanity can obscure the truth that, by becoming flesh, the Word became "consubstantial with us" in humanity[45] and "like us in all things but sin" (Heb 4:15). It can also obscure the "indissoluble" and "inseparable bond" that unites Jesus to Mary (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 53 and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103). The Fathers of the Church and medieval writers—in light of Mary, the New Eve, and Christ, the New Adam—consistently affirm the inseparability between the Son and the Mother in the work of Redemption (cf. John the Geometer, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Arnold of Chartres, etc.). Prominent spiritual writers, as well as popes, stress the intimate unity of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary in Redemption (St. Brigid of Sweden; St. John Eudes, St. Louis de Montfort, Pius XII, St. John Paul II, etc.). The DDF's emphasis on the "infinite distance between our nature and the divine life" can also obscure the call of the faithful "to share the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), which is the classic spiritual doctrine of *theosis* or divinization.

Speculative efforts to distance the divine Jesus from the human Mary not only seem to reject Mary's intrinsic relation to the order of the hypostatic union of Jesus (cf. Suárez) and the intimacy between the divine Son and his human mother, they also logically distance Jesus from the rest of humanity as well. If Jesus is so distant from his immaculate human mother, what is our hope as a

[43] Victoria Cardiel, "Virgin Mary Doesn't Have 'the Role of Holding Back God's Wrath," Vatican Expert Says," *Catholic News Agency* (November 19, 2025): https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/267921/virgin-mary-doesnt-have-the-role-of-holding-back-gods-wrath-vatican-expert-says#:~:text=Following%20the%20reaction%20to%20the,or%20%E2%80%9CMediatrix%E2%80%9D%20distorts%20the%20Christian

[44] See [Mons.] Antonio Stagliano, "L'incona della disimilitudine," *L'Osservatore Romano* (11 November, 2025): https://www.osservatoreromano.va/it/news/2025-11/quo-259/l-icona-della-dissimilitudine.html.

[45] See the Council of Chalcedon's definition in D-H, no. 301.

fallen humanity to have a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus, a theme so strongly emphasized within the recent pontificate of Leo XIV?

39. In light of later comments made after a November 25, 2025 Vatican Press conference, ***Cardinal Fernandez clarified the expression "always inappropriate" to mean ultimately that the Co-redemptrix title will no longer appear in "official documents of the Magisterium" or "official liturgical texts," but that the Co-redemptrix title can continue to be legitimately used in common informed discussions with an accurate traditional meaning, as well as in prayer groups and private devotion.***[46]

This new DDF stance represents a significant positive shift from the generic meaning of "always inappropriate" as contained in the document (n. 22) to a new Dicastery position which confirms the continued appropriate use of the Co-redemptrix title among those with a correct understanding of the title and doctrine. Nonetheless, MPF continues to have a substantial omission of the *redemptive value of Mary's unique active cooperation in objective redemption*, as well as what we see to be an unnecessary prohibition of the legitimate Co-redemptrix title from future official documents of the Holy See and from liturgical texts. Cardinal Fernandez also made no clarification concerning the document's negative commentary on the Mediatrix of all graces title, nor on the DDF's denial of Our Lady's secondary causality in the mediation of redemptive graces to humanity, which remains in doctrinal contradiction to centuries of papal magisterial teachings.

VI. Conclusion

40. *Mater Populi Fidelis* repeatedly speaks of the "risks" (n. 22) of using the Co-redemptrix title and its accompanying teaching of Mary's uniquely redemptive role with Jesus in Redemption. It likewise warns of the dangers (n. 65, 67) in seeing Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces, who has a secondary causal role in the dispensing of all graces. However, it is precisely these teachings that constitute the perpetual doctrine of the Church—from their seed form in Scripture, to the Patristic model of Mary as the New Eve, up to modern and contemporary popes, who have repeatedly used these titles and articulated the doctrines that these titles represent in concise form.

The "risks" posited appear more theoretical than real. It would be difficult to find within the Church a single reputable Catholic author in the last three centuries who taught that the Co-redemptrix title denotes that Mary is divine or an equal redeemer parallel to Jesus. For those outside the Church, the Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces titles become excellent opportunities for authentic Catholic evangelization, along with other key Catholic truths that require appropriate explanations, such as the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, the Papacy, and the intercession of the Saints.

The classic and authentically Catholic conception of Redemption—deeply grounded in Scripture and Tradition—is that Jesus Christ, the sole divine Redeemer and the one divine Mediator between God and man, died for us out of love and redeemed us by his blood. Catholic theology, however, also affirms that God, according to his providential design, willed to include the Virgin Mary in the work of Redemption. God wished to associate the contribution of an immaculate human woman and mother to his saving design. He did this in order to reveal his great love for humanity,

[46] https://dianemontagna.substack.com/p/cardinal-fernandez-clarifies-co-redemptrix, accessed November 28, 2025.

his divine respect for our human freedom, and the redemptive value of every Christian when actively seeking and courageously suffering to fulfill his or her individual role in the Divine plan. In the perfection and universality of his redemptive work, Christ has chosen to give human suffering and sacrifice redemptive value, and this in an entirely singular way includes the redemptive value of his immaculate Mother. To propose, instead, a Redemption based on "Jesus alone" bereft of any human redemptive value on the part of Mary, seems to resemble more a Protestant theology of Redemption than that of the Catholic Church.

It is the sincere hope and prayer of the Theological Commission of the International Marian Association that this response will contribute, in a spirit of true synodal dialogue, to a re-evaluation of *Mater Populi Fidelis*. Our hope is that this re-evaluation will lead to a new expression of the Magisterium concerning these critically important Marian doctrines and titles in greater consistency, development, and harmony with the doctrinal teachings of previous popes. Among such teachings are those that recognize the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces.

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